

Casino Beat: Seats disappear fast for magic show

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Master illusionist Jeff McBride hasn't spent much time in Atlantic City since 2001. Suffice it to say it's the fans of the veteran wizard who have gotten the crummy end of that deal.

That's because McBride, whose new program, "Magic at the Edge," runs Thursday through Sunday through Sept. 2 at Trump Marina, always has been among the best magicians to appear in A.C.

As "Magic at the Edge" illustrates, McBride's brilliance remains intact. Among his talents is his ability to be cerebral and arty, yet accessible to audience members of all ages.

McBride earns his ooohs and ahhs with a program of small illusions that generally fall into the "close-up" category. He flawlessly executes each.

But what sets McBride apart is his presentation. Drawing heavily from Japanese Kabuki theater and smartly incorporating sound and lighting into his individual pieces, McBride creates a world of mystery and fantasy that takes his show to a level most magicians can't achieve.

All his more than two-dozen illusions baffle and entertain. And while he has plenty of new looks, he wisely has retained a few that are still wondrous some two decades after he introduced them to Atlantic City.

One is the delightful bit in which he conjures coins from various parts of the body of a young boy recruited from the audience (opening night, his mini-assistant proved to be entertaining in his own right, which added to the segment's fun).

Another is his signature routine, which has him changing a series of Kabuki-style masks in the blink of an eye. The sequence also includes him erasing one mask's face with a handkerchief, only to have it appear embedded on the cloth.

And there is the illusion in which McBride keeps re-filling two metal bowls with water, despite the lack of a visible source of H₂O. It is a unique and startling illusion that's made even better by the use of sound effects to suggest drops of water splashing into the bowls.

Among his other tricks are a too-cool turn during which playing cards appear from thin air at a ridiculous rate of speed and an amazing display of memory. For the latter, McBride distributes to audience members random pages torn from the current copy of Time magazine. He then perfectly describes -- in ridiculously minute detail -- the content of the pages.

Adding to the fun are some show-opening rope tricks by Jordan Wright and a Houdini-inspired strait-jacket escape by McBride's bride, Abigail.

Just because McBride bids the audience good night from the stage, it doesn't mean the show has ended. He simply moves to the concourse outside The Shell, where he continues his memory exhibition and meets and greets fans.



Photo provided
Jeff McBride will illustrate "Magic at the Edge" Thursdays through Sundays through Sept. 2 at Trump Marina.

